

27 December 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Richard Bissell

SUBJECT: Disposition [REDACTED] Pilots 25X1X7

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1. In June of 1955 a total of [REDACTED] were recruited as indigenous pilots for Project AQUESTONE. Of this number, 8 remained who are physically and professionally qualified. These 8 pilots have completed all physical and psychological examinations except the high altitude chamber run at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. This final check was postponed because of the expense and difficulty of procuring the necessary pressure suits at this time. In addition these 8 pilots have completed refresher training in T-33 aircraft at Craig Air Force Base, Alabama. All of them demonstrated average or above average qualifications as jet pilots. The course at Craig included day and night flying, acrobatics, instrument flight training, flight planning and navigation. They all completed a minimum of 45 hours of flying plus the complete jet qualification ground school course.

2. In general, these pilots have demonstrated above average intelligence. They prove to be particularly receptive to classroom instruction, and even though they are not fluent in English, they had no difficulty in absorbing the instruction. Most of them still lack facility in conversational English, but all are acceptable in aeronautical and air traffic control terminology. I would estimate that in 8 to 10 weeks they will be fluent enough in English to be considered fully acceptable for Project AQUESTONE.

3. It is very important for reasons of morale, future planning and management that we have an early decision regarding the ultimate integration of these pilots into Project AQUESTONE. They all understand that they were recruited for overflight activity and are most anxious to get on with such a program. We have also incurred considerable expense in their training to date, and I feel that we should not continue with extensive further training unless we fully expect to use them. We must also be very careful to protect the interest of the [REDACTED] in particular as they made the approach directly to [REDACTED] for the recruitment of these pilots with the full understanding that they would be used in an important program involving new equipment and overflight of the USSR.

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4. If a favorable decision is reached regarding the use of these pilots in Project AQUETONE we plan to send them to Luke Air Force Base, Phoenix, Arizona, for check out in F4U aircraft, and on completion of this course, arrange for them to have actual reconnaissance training including long range navigation missions with one of the reconnaissance wings of the Tactical Air Command USAF. If it is decided that we are not going to use these pilots in Project AQUETONE we feel that we must accomplish some token training in advanced type aircraft and therefore will go ahead with the training at Luke Air Force Base in the F4U as this is the latest plane programmed for the [REDACTED]

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5. [REDACTED] pilots are currently undergoing a period of rest and relaxation in Florida and I feel that it is imperative that we have some decision so that we can brief them accordingly shortly after the first of the year and prior to their movement to Luke Air Force Base. It is my feeling that these pilots have demonstrated that they possess the basic qualifications necessary for use in Project AQUETONE. I recommend that this be given favorable consideration.

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